

Regional Council of Mayors

April 14, 2014

PRESENTATIONS

Metro Groundwater Issues

Although the Twin Cities Metro is always going to have sufficient water, said Tom Landwehr, commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, we are too dependent on groundwater and we may see problems in the future because of that.

The DNR regulates use of groundwater when it issues appropriation permits but, he said, “We’re increasingly seeing cases where someone should have gotten a permit and didn’t.” <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2014/03/31/ground-level-beneath-the-surface-permits>

The source of drinking water for Greater MSP communities has dramatically changed: In the 1940s, about 90 percent was surface water (lakes, rivers) and only 10 percent from groundwater. Now, about 75 percent of the water used by Metro cities is from groundwater. “Groundwater is, frankly, pretty cheap,” Landwehr said. “It’s right there, you don’t have to transport it, and it’s good quality so you don’t have to treat it very much.”

But groundwater, moved out of underground aquifers goes down fast and doesn’t recover quickly, he said. Observation wells around the state have shown a dramatic decline in groundwater.

The DNR has seven core strategies for managing groundwater:

- Increase awareness of groundwater limitations.
- Enhance information available for decisions.
- Improve management of water appropriations.
- Improve compliance with permits and regulations.
- Improve communication and education.
- Effectively address challenges in areas of high use.
- Promote water conservation and wise use practices.

“As with energy, our first and preferred option is conservation,” Landwehr said. With aging systems, as much as 25 percent of groundwater can be lost before it even gets to a city’s homes, simply through leakage. The DNR and some cities are also looking at re-use options for water that goes through the system and ends up in area lakes and rivers.

Where possible, Landwehr said, the DNR hopes communities will use surface water, which is a more sustainable source than groundwater. For example, he said, currently we are taking only 2 percent of what could be used from the Mississippi without causing damage.

Groundwater doesn't follow municipal or county boundaries; Landwehr said the DNR has been hoping a collaborative group, like the League of Minnesota Cities, will work to find ways to save groundwater. Several mayors gave examples of how their cities were dealing with water:

- Mayor Janet Williams of Savage said that Burnsville and Savage built a joint water treatment plant that uses water from a limestone quarry. "Now 80 percent of our water comes from surface water and the aquifer is recovering."
- Mayor Ken Willcox of Wayzata said that when the city saw a report that it had the highest per capita use of water in the Metro, it looked at its water distribution system. "We found leaks and are now saving hundreds of thousands of gallons."

"One of the biggest challenges of groundwater is that you can't see it," said Landwehr. "It's hard to get your hands around it."

For more information see [PowerPoint](#).

East Metro Strong

It's not good for the region to be economically lopsided to the west, said Will Schroer, executive director of the new public-private partnership East Metro Strong, which is working towards transit investment in the East Metro.

"There's a positive spiral to the west of the region in terms of growth," said Schroer. "But the east is at risk of the opposite kind of spiral. There are places in St. Paul and the East Metro that would benefit from transit investment."

Schroer's goal is to pull together communities and leaders in Ramsey, Dakota and Washington counties to jointly seek transit investment. He said the boundaries of what constitutes East Metro aren't fully defined yet.

East Metro Strong is supported initially by a \$750,000 Moving the Market grant from the McKnight Foundation, but Schroer said the organization is expected to become self-sufficient.

For more information see [PowerPoint](#).

Mayors Against Illegal Guns

The state chapter of the national organization, Mayors Against Illegal Guns www.mayorsagainstilllegalguns.org, is working to align Minnesota law with federal law for domestic abusers and those with restraint orders against them, making it illegal for them to carry handguns. This is primarily a bipartisan effort, said Scott Hogan, state director of Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

The national organization was started by former Mayor New York City Michael Bloomberg of New York and former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino in 2006. St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman was an early member of the group.

Richard Carlborn, former mayor of St. Joseph, who is working with the group, said that after starting with a national organization, Mayors Against Illegal Guns is trying to build meaningful relationships within states.

Erin Dady said the City of St. Paul has used the national organization as a resource as it deals with gun issues and, she said, "It's a great way to connect with other mayors."

UPDATES

Minnesota Legislature

The 2014 Minnesota Legislature is moving quickly, said Patricia Naumann of Envision Minnesota. The first omnibus tax bill was passed in mid-March, which said was "unprecedentedly early." With that off the table, there is less leverage for other issues.

The MoveMN transportation package, which includes an increase in the gas tax, is stalled, Naumann said: "I think it's fair to say it's dead."

The governor was sent a letter signed by the presidents of the League of Minnesota Cities, the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, the Minnesota Association of Small Cities and the Municipal Legislative Commission asking for legislative authority to create street improvement districts, in order to do regular maintenance http://www.lmc.org/media/document/1/letter_sid.pdf?inline=true.

Naumann said, "I think our chances are very slim on this," but that it is a first step in a process that may take several years.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Recently returned from the ULI Spring Meeting in Vancouver, Caren Dewar said two things in particular (among many) struck her as she toured the host city:

The public realm is valued. "It's a very highly designed city, a very curated city." There are no freeways through the core of the city and all parking is underground. "There are places in our region where higher density works and other places where you don't want it," Dewar said. "But everyone benefits from a strong public realm."

The political process allows for more flexibility. The city leadership sets policy, but it's implemented by staff, which allows staff to work with developers.

Upcoming Events

- **6th Annual Housing Summit:** June 5, 7:30–11am, Hopkins Center for the Arts. Keynote speaker is Julie Campoli, author of *Made for Walking and Visualizing Density*. <http://minnesota.uli.org/event/6th-annual-housing-initiative-summit/>
- **Greater MSP ahead 2014:** April 25, 8–10am, Target Headquarters South Plaza. <http://minnesota.uli.org/event/greatermspahead-annual-celebration/>

COMING UP

The next RCM meeting will be Monday, May 12, 11:30am–1:30pm at Dorsey & Whitney, 50 S. 6th St. Minneapolis. Presentations will include Red Cross and Greater MSP Success Indicators.

Mayors are encouraged to email caren.dewar@uli.org with suggestions for topics to add to the agenda.

ATTENDEES

The following individuals were in attendance on April 14, 2014:

Mayors

Jim Adams	City of Crystal
Ardell Brede	City of Rochester
Jo Emerson	City of White Bear Lake
Jerry Faust	City of St. Anthony
Mary Giuliani Stephens	City of Woodbury
Mary Hamann-Roland	City of Apple Valley
Shep Harris	City of Golden Valley
Ken Hedberg	City of Prior Lake
Kathi Hemken	City of New Hope
Jim Hovland	City of Edina
Sandra Krebsbach	City of Mendota Heights
Mike Maguire	City of Eagan
Sandy Martin	City of Shoreview
Gene Maxwell	City of Hopkins
Tim McNeil	City of Dayton
Duane Poppe	City of Osseo
Terry Schneider	City of Minnetonka
Nora Slawik	City of Maplewood
Brad Tabke	City of Shakopee
Nancy Tyra-Lukens	City of Eden Prairie
Elizabeth Weir	City of Medina
Ken Willcox	City of Wayzata
Janet Williams	City of Savage
Gene Winstead	City of Bloomington

Guests

Cecile Bedor, City of St. Paul; Rick Carter, LHB; Mark Casey, St. Anthony Village; Erin Dady, City of St. Paul; Jim Erkel, MCEA; Jenna Fletcher, Trust for Public Land; Kevin Frazell, League of Minnesota Cities; Todd Klingel, Minneapolis Regional Chamber; Mike Mornson, City of Hopkins; Patricia Naumann, Envision Minnesota; Cathy Polasky, City of Minneapolis; Elizabeth Ryan, Family Housing Fund; Adam Schiff, Sen. Klobuchar's office; Will Schroeer, East Metro Strong; Jamie Verbrugge, Brooklyn Park.

ULI Staff/Consultants

Caren Dewar, Aubrey Austin, Cathy Bennett, Linda Picone